

Division for the Visually Impaired  
Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Meeting  
May 14, 2018  
Smyrna Rest Stop  
5500 DuPont Parkway, Smyrna, DE 19977

Call to Order by Chair, Kevin McAllister

Attendees:

Chair: Kevin McAllister; Vice Chair: Suzanne Howell; Members: Blake Roberts, Darryl Garner (teleconference), Pat Burrell; Division for the Visually Impaired: Elisha Jenkins, Jill Morrison, Erin Weaver, Deb Bradl, Lucian Cardona; Public: Lloyd Schmitz

Minutes of Previous Meeting

- December 11, 2017
- January 8, 2018
- February 12, 2018
- March 16, 2018
- March 17, 2018 – Correction required – Member Blake Roberts' name was incorrect on the March 17, 2018 Minutes. After correction, the minutes of March 17 & 18, 2018 are approved.

Old Business:

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment – Deborah Bradl provided an update on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). A draft CSNA will be completed by May 25, 2018. The CSNA utilized consumer surveys, focus groups, staff interviews and partner feedback.

## 2018 Retreat:

The Town Hall Meeting and following retreat were informative and collaborative.

Mr. Garner spoke with consumers who attended after the meeting. He stated that consumers were getting involved and the feedback was good.

The Council would like to engage new members. They would like to add two more Council members. Some enhancements to future Town Hall meetings include posting a clearly communicated agenda to avoid confusion. It was recommended that the Council create two agendas (Town Hall meeting and Retreat agenda). Due to the VRAC being a public body, specifics to closed sessions must be followed; public meeting requirements are available to the council. One other recommendation include effective communication of meeting time and date. Some accomplishments include:

- Accomplished: New member, Jacqueline Poquette welcomed at Retreat.
- Accomplished: Recommendations for State Plan were completed.
- Action item: Assign tasks in between meetings to be reported out – Dissect Minutes to pick out key issues and assign tasks accordingly.
- Action item: Create committees to handle action items between meetings.
- Action item: Darryl Garner volunteered to try to find new Council members.

Elisha Jenkins, Director of DVI was acknowledged for her assistance with the retreat.

## Strategic Planning Work Groups Updates:

Request clarification as to expectation for the work group:

- Assistive Technology work group: 1 meeting

- Fiscal work group: 2 meetings
- Technology work group: 5 individuals met and discussed what is expected by consumers.
- Rapid Ready is in place so there is no delay in serving the consumer.
- Rapid Ready Room: Require document stating exactly what should be kept in the Rapid Ready.
- Inventory needs to be refined.
- Other input includes what we might like to have in Rapid Ready.

Technology Center: What would consumers like to see in technology center?

The work groups were designed to strategically address concerns received by Secretary Walker in August 2017 providing a framework on the various priorities of the visually impaired community.

#### State Plan:

The State Plan was addressed during the March 18, 2018 retreat. The State Plan was posted on the Division's website for public comment then submitted to RSA. The Council recommends that in order to maximize public comment, the agency identify a mechanism to notify the public the plan is available for public comment. One recommendation was to incorporate the State Plan into future Town Hall meetings. The Council would like to have more lead time to review and make recommendations in order to address State Plan at Town Hall meetings.

#### Director's Report:

Elisha Jenkins introduced Lucian Cardona, Sr. VR Counselor.

DVI is pleased to welcome Ms. Sandra Miller to the team as the Division's Deputy Director. Sandi has a wealth of vocational rehabilitation experience, currently coordinates transition services and was the agency's first Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

The Division's Federal AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) Grant volunteers will begin their service beginning Tuesday, May 1 and will serve through April 30, 2019.

On Friday April 20, 2018, Low Vision Specialist Dr. Daniel Baruffi began to provide low vision examinations at the Milford location. The location provides consumers with convenient access to examinations since Delaware Eye Institute in Rehoboth ceased to provide examinations last fall. Dr. Baruffi will patients in the Milford office every 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Harold Webb exhibited at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual 55+ Expo at Dover Downs. The event targeted older Delawareans and featured free health screenings, a wellness center, and caregiver resources.

Members of the Independent Living Services Unit provided sensitivity training to Delaware Hospitality School students on April 26, 2018.

The Older Blind Technical Assistance Team will be on-site on June 4-7, 2018. The Technical Assistance Team is seeking participants for a focus group to discuss the program.

The Summer Academy will occur July 9-20, 2018 at Blindsight Delaware.

The NFB BELL program is scheduled for July 30 – August 10, 2018 at Blindsight Delaware. DVI is pleased to support the NFB's program.

Workshops are recorded and posted on Social Media; efforts are underway to make the recording available on the website as well.

May is Healthy Vision Month. Events include: May 2<sup>nd</sup> – Ask the Eye Doctor, May 2<sup>nd</sup> – DVI at UMC Kenton. May 16<sup>th</sup> – Healthy Vision Family Night – DVI and the Delaware Children's Museum are co-hosting Healthy Vision Family Night at the museum. May 25<sup>th</sup> – Paratransit Updates and Q & A.

Vocational Rehabilitation: The VR team hosted Spring Break Week in April. There were 11 participants. Activities included ILS skills, career exploration, assistive technology (the students really enjoyed the Amazon Echo) and a field trip to the NFB focused on STEM.

Two students were panelists in this year's Pathways to Employment Conference. Accolades have been received and shared with the students.

Staff participated in the Delaware Conference for the Deaf-Blind Helen Keller Learning Community. Resource information and materials will be disseminated to the deaf-blind individuals we serve.

Instructional Resource and Materials Center: The IRMC has met a major milestone with 500,000 braille pages.

Education Services: At the most recent Pennsylvania-Delaware Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired Conference, one of DVI's teachers for the visually impaired presented a session entitled "Do you want to play with me" which focused on self-advocacy skills and how to adapt everyday games for students with visual impairments. In addition, one Orientation and Mobility Therapist led a discussion focusing on "Focusing on the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Orientation & Mobility Instruction".

At DVI's Family Night 12 participants gathered at the Biggs location to enjoy games and networking. The families from Kent and Sussex met at the DABA Bowling event in Milford on April 14<sup>th</sup>. The event was well attended.

The next Family Night is scheduled to take place on Friday May 4, 2018 in both the New Castle and Milford locations. The theme will be Cinco de Mayo.

The Unified English Braille public forums to seek stakeholder input regarding Delaware's Unified English Braille (UEB) implementation plan will be held throughout the month. The UEB plan will be disseminated on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

There are 2 positions open for Orientation and Mobility.

There are 5 positions open for TVIs.

Strategy for open positions is to post the jobs on job boards/job exchange and various other sites in addition to posting on the state website.

There is new legislation regarding student loan forgiveness – this will be helpful in competing with other states for the same talent

#### **New/Special Business:**

White Cane Day 2018 – Melody May is coordinating the 2018 Technology Fair at Delaware Tech in Dover. White Cane Day activities may be included in the activities at the fair. The VRAC and Business Consultants will coordinate the partner recognition awards. The VRAC representative for the fair is Darryl Garner. The VRAC will also staff a table at the Tech Fair.

It was suggested that a training should be held for Emergency Preparedness for the blind/visually impaired community. Blindsight provided a workshop for SMART 911. Facilitators worked individually with each individual and assisted in registering for SMART 911.

Council was asked for suggestions on White Cane Day 2018 as well as for trainings the Council may want to participate.

#### **2018 Advocacy Activities:**

May is Healthy Vision Month – Diane Delaney sent out communication regarding upcoming workshops/events that are happening this month. The Council was encouraged to participate in these events.

#### **RSA Guidelines:**

Updates to RSA Guidelines were discussed.

Prior Approval process was introduced. Any changes in this process should be sent to Council. Prior Approval process is ever-volving and the agency has requested clarification and continues to develop process.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Summary

As of May 4, 2018, the VR caseload is 268 with a total of 10 individuals employed.

- 4 successful closures FY 2018 employed more than 90 days
- 6 individuals that are currently employed less than 90 days
- 20 individuals that are ready to work
- 80 individuals that are currently in training or a higher education program
- 83 transition age students (age 14-21) and 102 transition age students that are (14-24)

### New Partnerships:

- Goodwill
- Delaware Technical Community College
- Panda Express
- Downtown Visions
- Home Depot
- Radio One
- Brandywine School District
- New Castle County Chamber of Commerce
- CreativeSpirit-us.org

### Transition Services:

Pathways Conference: The Division for the Visually Impaired staff and transition students attended the Pathways Conference on April 27, 2018. Governor Carney was one of the keynote speakers. The Division for the Visually Impaired was a partner in providing this opportunity to the public. In addition, two Division for the Visually Impaired transition students presented at the Pathways Conference on self-advocacy and self-determination. The audience was impressed by their presentation.

Transition Week: The Division for the Visually Impaired Transition Student Spring Break 2018 took place from April 4<sup>th</sup> through April 6<sup>th</sup>. There were nine students ages 14 to 19 who participated in the activities. Independent Living Services, Technology Center, and Vocational Rehabilitation staff provided meaningful activities to support the students in their everyday living, vocational and assistive technology needs. The students were provided with an opportunity to travel to the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) in Baltimore. They were able to meet with the first vice-president of the organization. The NFB provided the students with an opportunity to explore new and innovative technology, STEM component was part of the activities presented.

Summer Academy activities are being planned by VR, Technology, and ILS. Activities include career development, independent living activities and more. The summer activities are scheduled for July 9, 2018 through July 20, 2018. These activities will take place at Blindsight Delaware from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.